

## Latest News from the Children's Home

### Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

The Home is based in Epworth, a suburb of Harare, Zimbabwe.

**We give support, mainly by cash but also by advice and assistance, to the Home for the benefit of the Children.**

Newsletter  
January 2004

### **Chairman's Report.**

Dear Friends,

Welcome to 2004, and especially to new members who have joined us, many through meeting Astonishment Mapurisa during his very busy visit in October 2003. He met many of the Friends and he was impressive both in his talks and in the understanding he showed. We were pleased to hear of the stable life the children are living, in spite of the country's difficulties. We were impressed by the stability of his staff, most of whom were in post in the mid nineties, when our visits to the Home were more frequent. The children have food, clothing and education. These are the key priorities for a child's upbringing in Zimbabwe, just as elsewhere. Health care may be difficult, the cost and labour of seeking out food is difficult, but it is a relief to hear that it is being achieved. It takes determination and inventiveness, as he described in his talks.

It was most useful to read MRCH's annual report for 2002. Astonishment said we are providing 70% of the Home's income,

There were also impressive indications of the Home tackling the problems for children of living in a large group, with dormitory bedrooms. We have heard of the initiatives of NCH and the World Church Office in London, with plans to build house units taking about 10 children, and now hear that the roof of the first one is up. (Costs of the further units are rising fast, so may be delayed)

The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe has widened the scope of the MRCH board, to help families in the community. Local churches are finding many family needs, especially from deaths of parents, and MRCH will help to mobilise and train volunteers.

NCH and the World Church Office have decided to appoint a person to work with communities and national churches in Southern Africa, for three years. Barry Barnes who has been our contact at NCH, has accepted the offer of this post, which will enable us to continue our much valued collaboration with him.

As noted previously, I have decided to step down as Chair at the AGM in Birmingham on February 7th, so here is a review of our progress since we were formed in 1997.

Our inaugural meeting, in January, attracted 17 people, a figure similar to the AGM's ever since. Our first newsletter went to 32 addresses, compared with 187 today. Our funding of MRCH has risen rapidly to £3,000 per month

**Support for Children**

The widening brief of MRCH will be an extra challenge to us, and we must consider how we can help in this excellent development.

I wish to record my thanks to our Secretaries first Malcolm Payne, and then Shirley Richer, and our Treasurer Paddy Coles. He has also done much work with the Southampton District network. I thank the executive committee members for their support and I welcome Carol Banham's nomination as our new Chair. I plan to continue as an Executive member.

Our many members have given strong support to MRCH. Much of our strength comes from the fact that many of us have visited the Home, and we continue to receive information on the current position. We continue to be impressed by the staff's personal commitment to helping the children they are looking after.

John Bromley

**We were very sorry to hear that on returning home Astonishment had a serious car accident, injuring shoulders and ribs. We have sent him our best wishes, and are glad that the latest news is that he is recovering.**

#### **Treasurer's Report.**

We are a voluntary group with neither staff nor premises so that our running costs are minimal.

The prime aim of the Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home is to raise funds to support the work of the Home so that the children can be fed, clothed and educated. The donations received last year were higher than ever and all your generosity is much appreciated. The Superintendent said the Home was very dependent on our cheques and could not continue without them. Last year we sent a total of £38,000 to the Home, more than ever before; partly due to a change by foreign exchange dealers who no longer will supply Zimbabwe Dollars which means we must send pounds sterling to the Home. In this case the Zimbabwe Government places limits on the exchange rate which are much less favourable to the Home.

**Thank you particularly to the Southampton District Network for their wonderful generosity. On the 2nd of October, our Secretary attended the District Network Day and accepted a cheque for £21,000 on behalf of MRCH.**

#### **Aston's Visit**

We were delighted to welcome Astonishment Mapurisa, the superintendent of MRCH, when he visited us in October 03. In three weeks, he addressed meetings in Orpington, Preston, York, Doncaster, Highworth in Wiltshire, Bristol, Ringwood, and Surbiton as well as visiting several NCH establishments. This was a tough work load with so many meetings and journeys but he remained calm and full of enthusiasm throughout. Here are some comments from his hosts.

Surbiton , Surrey  
- Alan and May Knight.

As Astonishment was to be based at N.C.H. H.Q. in London, we were offered dates either at the beginning of his tour or during the last couple of days. To give us time to circulate Friends in the area we chose Thursday 30th. October. Unfortunately this turned out to be in half- term week and fewer folk turned up than we had hoped for. However we were pleased to welcome visitors and members of the Friends and the generosity of those who came enabled us to send £500 to Paddy. It was a privilege and pleasure to host Astonishment We did not at first recognise the serious young man introducing the video as the bubbly, smiling Astonishment we were entertaining. We were very impressed by his dedication to the Home and the surrounding community, and by the positive attitude he takes despite all the difficulties of everyday life in Zimbabwe.

York - Lorna Graff

“We had an excellent meeting with a very happy atmosphere”. “The best evening meeting I’ve been to”. These were only two of the comments and people are still talking about it a week later. About fifty people came, some from other churches. Astonishment spoke so clearly and movingly. Then we had a break for refreshments while people circulated and talked to Aston, then we had the video followed by questions. I had put up photos taken on my last visit and we sold Christmas cards. This was not planned as a fund raising event but we collected just over £300.

Highworth, Wiltshire – John and Shirley Richer

We picked up Aston in Wolverhampton to speak at our meeting planned for the same day in the Highworth Methodist church hall.

Aston was introduced to 35 people and gave an unscripted, off the cuff presentation followed by his video focussing on the teaching of handicraft and food production skills. We all enjoyed his description of the children’s life and also his video showing the craft and domestic activities. £200 was raised for MRCH by donations after the meeting.

Aston was a delight to be with throughout the whole, too short visit.

Eighteen months ago, The Highworth Methodist church adopted two overseas projects, MRCH and REACH Rumania The latter is a Swindon based Christian group giving financial and practical help and spiritual guidance to a community in Romania.

The whole church was involved in a series of fund raising events which were all enjoyable and at the same time drew people nearer together.

In eighteen months, the projects have shared over £4,000 from a wide range of fund raising activities including musical concerts, Christmas fairs, cream teas, Safari Suppers, presentations and by individual donations.

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#### Bristol Joe and Eileen Withington

Astonishment Mapurisa's visit to the Southwest was brief but very effective, though limited time prevented him travelling further. Aston arrived on Friday and quickly made himself at home, visiting the Thornbury Methodist Church which has supported the Home since 1982. As a methodist local preacher Aston was pleased on Saturday "as a part of my heritage" to visit the John Wesley 'New Room' in Bristol which was the first Methodist preaching house. On Saturday evening there was a joint meeting of Thornbury and Alveston fellowship groups, where he showed his latest video of MRCH and led an open forum on present conditions in Zimbabwe and on plans to extend the work of the Home. Donations totalled £375 and promissory note totalled £1,800.

He told it as it is and people were deeply moved.

Aston was the third Superintendent to visit Thornbury and confirm the various exchanges between the church and MRCH. On Sunday, cheques of over £2,700 were handed over for the Home. This was a very successful weekend.

#### Ringwood Paddy Coles.

In his tour of the UK, Astonishment visited Ringwood and gave us an illustrated talk about the Home and its current way of living. We have benefited greatly from his first hand knowledge of the needs and situation in Zimbabwe. On a lighter note we took him to the coast to enjoy a first view of the sea but after feeling it, he quickly said it was too cold to venture in the water.

#### Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

##### Notices.

1. **Please note our AGM is on Saturday the 7th of February** at Birmingham International Student Homes, 52 Oakwood Road Selly Park, Birmingham.

**You are warmly invited to attend.**

We meet at 1.00pm to share our lunch; the AGM then starts at 2.00pm. and usually ends before 4.00pm. Please let the Secretary know if you plan to attend and she will supply directions.

2. The Treasurer will be pleased to receive annual membership contribution for 2004; we suggest £5 minimum but all donations are welcome.

3. If you have any news of the Home or of fund raising efforts. to share with others, we are always keen to hear from you.

This is a Newsletter distributed by the  
Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home